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PRESS RELEASE

USAID helps Macedonian automotive suppliers to partner with Volkswagen

On March 17th, the USAID Competitiveness Project joined the Minister for Foreign Investment, Vele Samak, in organizing the first Macedonian Automotive Supplier Conference in Skopje, with participation of a major manufacturer, the Volkswagen Group. This is the first conference of its kind in the region, with 11 Macedonian auto parts producers coming together with Volkswagen to explore business opportunities and develop strategic partnerships.

"USAID is helping Macedonia to become more competitive in the global economy. Through the Competitiveness Project, we are supporting initiatives such as this conference, to provide assistance to Macedonian companies to integrate in the global automotive supply chains. In the long term, these initiatives will result in increased value-added exports and new jobs," said Marcia Wong, USAID Economic Growth Director.

"Macedonia is now on the map of the automotive industry, and Macedonian auto parts producers have opportunities to supply parts for Volkswagen, Audi, Skoda and Seat," said Minister Samak. The domestic companies participating at the conference - Vesna SAP, IZO Staklo, Amak, SIPO, Velmaks, Ruen, TT Plast, Niche Aurora, Prutex, MZT Learnica and TCG Learnica - were selected by Volkswagen according to specific criteria. After passing the thorough assessment by Volkswagen, Macedonian companies will have direct access to its supply chains.

In addition to co-organizing the conference, the USAID Competitiveness Project worked closely with the Macedonian companies to help them strategically position themselves as valuable partners for Volkswagen, by presenting information on their current and planned capacity and quality of production lines.

NOTE TO EDITORS:

The American people, through USAID, have invested nearly \$500 million in Macedonia since 1993. USAID is implementing projects that increase investment, create jobs, reduce corruption and improve the quality of education in Macedonia. These initiatives support Macedonia's transition to a stable democracy and its successful integration into the European Union. USAID provides economic and humanitarian assistance in more than 100 countries. For more information please visit <http://macedonia.usaid.gov>.